



AMERICAN FRONTIER CULTURE FOUNDATION

Bringing the Past to Life

Volume 24, No. 2 Summer 2010

Breathing Life Into History: Historic Interpreters

Interpreters are an important part of the Frontier Culture Museum experience. At every farm, most visitors will get their information from our interpreters. Unlike many living history museums, our interpreters are dressed in period clothing but are not in period “character”, meaning they can speak to you about modern times. This allows for comparative discussions of the changes in farming and other technology.

So what does an interpreter do on a typical day at the Museum? First and foremost, no matter which task the interpreter is working on they engage each visitor in the life of the farm. Some tasks are quite straightforward, such as feeding the animals on the farm (depending on the farm), and making sure they have water. Other tasks vary and each farm will usually have a particular main activity or two to complete each day. Common activities on the English farm, for example, include cheese making, baking or cooking, gardening, spinning, cleaning, washing clothes, sewing and wool processing. Of course, when possible the interpreter will incorporate visitors or tour groups to help them complete the main activity, or they might use the activity to explain more in depth about how people on that particular farm lived.

As completely as possible, interpreters use the same methods, tools and skills to keep our historic farms running smoothly. For example, baking on the English farm is typically done on Saturday. The first thing to be done is to start a fire and preheat the bake oven; this usually takes about four hours. While the oven is heating the interpreter gathers the baking ingredients and decides what will be made. Bread and a strawberry tart would be nice to make at this time of year. Visitors can be involved in this process by breaking up sugar in the mortar and pestle for the filling or kneading dough for the bread. Once in a while children have even willingly helped wash the dishes! Once the oven is preheated, the coals are

shoveled down into “purgatory” to make soap later, and the oven is completely swept out, the bread — 2 to 3 round loaves — can be put in. After the bread has baked for about 30 minutes and has produced the “ideal” hollow sound, the strawberry tart can then go in. Bake ovens are “falling” ovens so the tart, which cooks at a lower temperature, would always be put in second. The bake oven door is often put on to hold the heat in when multiple items are being baked. Two interpreters can easily be kept busy baking and talking to visitors on a bake day.



Sally Landes, an interpreter on the English Farm, bakes sugar cookies with the help of visitors and volunteers.

There are times an interpreter is needed to lead sheep from one pasture to another, to help milk a cow or give direction to a volunteer or John Lewis Society member (our junior interpreters). Interpreters sometimes move from one farm to another to cover for a fellow interpreter or help with school groups on a busy day. Special events, such as May Day and the 4th of July bring even more variety to the typical day of an interpreter. Hence, there is no such thing as a typical day for an interpreter. The variety of activities and visitors brings new experiences each day. 🍪

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Celebrate a Traditional Independence Day



Cross-cut sawing at the 2009 Independence Day Celebration, not as easy as it looks.

On July 3rd the Frontier Culture Museum will celebrate American Independence one day early! Many activities will be on hand at the 1820s American Farm to engage the whole family in a traditional early American July 4th celebration. This will be an event to show off your patriotic red,

white and blue. At each reading of The Declaration of Independence we will toast the town as well as the militia encamped at the farm. A real treat will be the presentation of arms by the militia in honor of the country's birthday, not something you experience every day.

The day's activities will include:

12:00pm & 3:30pm Declaration of Independence Reading

2:00pm & 4:00pm Pie Eating Contest

11:00am to 4:00pm

Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest (every hour on the hour), Sack Races, Cross-Cut Sawing, Graces, quoits, and other games, Militia Camp, Traditional music on the front porch of the 1820s farm house.

Visitors are welcome to bring their own picnic lunch and enjoy an old fashioned July 4th at the American Farm. Refreshments will

also be available for purchase. The full Museum is open for free to visitors during our Independence Day celebration. 🍷

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First Fridays at the Frontier Culture Museum are free evenings, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Programming is centered around a specific theme and visitors can experience something new and different than what happens during a daytime visit. Join us at the Frontier Culture Museum for a First Friday evening:

August 6 John Lewis First Friday

The historic farms will be staffed by our junior interpreters who will demonstrate and explain historic activities on the farms.

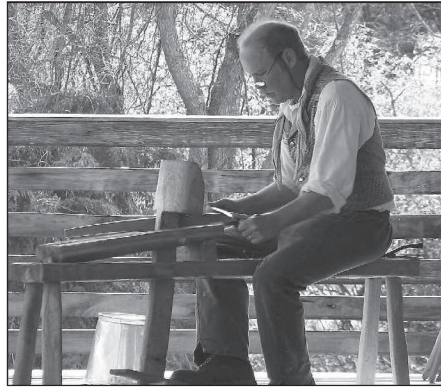
September 3 Music/Animals

Historic breeds of livestock are a rarity these days, and on this night we will highlight the breeds that live at the Museum. We might also have the chance to present music in our new amphitheater. 🎵

Learning From Our Ancestors

How do you make an arrow? What *is* an atlatl? These questions and more will be answered at the Frontier Culture Museum's **Primitive Technologies Day** on Saturday, July 10. The event will bring together practitioners of ancestral technologies and the local Massanutten Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Virginia to engage guests in the technologies of prehistoric peoples. Throughout the day, visitors will get the chance to use an atlatl (a tool that assists in throwing a spear) as well as observe or take part in various other ancestral technologies. Many hands-on activities will be available including: creating jewelry, learning how a stone ax can bring down a small tree, practicing the art of grinding stone tools, making fire (before the advent of matches), and much more!

By recreating the technologies of the past to make prehistoric tools, experimental archaeologists and other specialists preserve methods of tool use that were very important to our ancestors. These specialists recognize the



Join us on July 10 to see technologies much older than the historic technologies and techniques interpreters use on the 1820s American Farm.

clues left behind by the technologies used by our ancestors; when there are only material things left behind these clues tell us a lot. These skills help recognize the marks on a piece of belong to a certain scraping tool, or they may know the chemical make-up of pigments when paintings are found

on cave walls. Knowing what natural products and processing methods create certain colors can tell you how far ancient humans traveled to collect or trade for those items. The science of learning how our ancestors made and used tools is integral to understanding how they lived in both historic and prehistoric times.

Visitors are invited to bring in local artifacts for identification by the Archaeological Society of Virginia from 9:00am to noon. Please limit your artifacts to those originally from the Shenandoah Valley. In the afternoon Dr. Carole Nash from James Madison University will talk about archaeology in the Shenandoah Valley. Most activities and events will be located near the Irish Farm at the Steve B. Dod Amphitheater. Primitive Technologies Day will be an event not to miss! For more information about any of the day's activities, please call the Visitors Center at 540-332-7850. General Admission. ●

Don't Miss These Exciting Events!

Join us for fun and exciting events
(*your won't even know you're learning*) at the Frontier Culture Museum!

Craft Beer Festival ~ June 26 ~ Local distributors will showcase their craft beer selections. Enjoy a fun-filled day with music, food and of course... beer!

Independence Day Celebration ~ July 3 ~ Join our traditional Independence Day celebration at the American Farms! Admission is free to the whole Museum.

Primitive Technologies Day ~ July 10 ~ Learn about a variety of primitive technologies you've only heard about before and bring in local artifacts for identification. General Admission.

Frontier Beach Party ~ August 7 ~ Our most unique fundraiser of the year returns! Look for your invitation in the mail or call the Foundation office to add your name to the list.

Shenandoah Valley Blues Festival ~ August 21 ~ Chase away the dog days of summer enjoying local music at the Frontier Culture Museum.

USCIS Naturalization Ceremony ~ September 13 ~ Join us for this important and time-honored tradition of welcoming new United States citizens. Everyone is welcome to help us celebrate.

West African Farm- Igbo Farm Village Dedication ~ September 18 ~ Join us for the momentous occasion of international proportions: the official dedication of our newest farm exhibit.

Heritage Golf Classic ~ September 23 ~ Our annual golf tournament is in its 11th year. Contact the Foundation Office for more information.

For more information about any of our events, please call the Visitors Center at 540-332-7850.

Looking for a *Special Place* for your *Special Event*? Look no further than the **Frontier Culture Museum**

Our facilities are versatile to accommodate any special occasion such as a reunion, corporate function, wedding or other event.

All facilities are handicap accessible with easy access to parking and modern conveniences in a country setting. Consider the Frontier Culture Museum for your next special occasion.

The **Lee S. Cochran Pavilion** is a very special setting with easy access and a beautiful panoramic view overlooking the Museum and Valley beyond. The open-air pavilion has space to expand and is equipped with drop-down tent sides, setting the stage for a truly memorable event. It is a space for any occasion.

The **Octagonal Barn** is a unique, eight-sided, two-story barn with modern conveniences and an elegant, rustic feel. With direct access from the parking lot, the barn is located slightly farther away from the bustle within the Museum. It has been a popular site for smaller weddings, rehearsal dinners and reunions.

What better way to leave your guests with wonderful memories of your event than a unique setting like the Frontier Culture Museum? For more information, or to reserve Museum facilities, contact Gwen Kite at 540-332-7850 or gwen.kite@fcmv.virginia.gov.

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**Free 1/2 lb. fudge
When you buy a pound.**

The Museum Store
American Frontier Culture Foundation

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Kim.wills@fcmv.virginia.gov

*Fresh Fudge is always available in seasonal and
traditional flavors. We can also accommodate
special orders of your favorite fudge flavor.*

There is something for everyone at *The Museum Store*

At the American Frontier Culture Museum you will find a wide assortment of items associated with frontier life, the Shenandoah Valley and the origins of our Old World farms (England, Ireland, Germany and West Africa).

Where else will you find homemade quilts, local honey, maple syrup, jams and jellies as well as crafts from Shenandoah Valley craftsmen and acclaimed Irish Nicholas Mosse Pottery? Our book selection covers many topics ranging from history to frontier cookbooks. There are also books for children and anyone interested in learning frontier crafts. Next time you visit the Frontier Culture Museum, stop into the store and check us out.

The American Frontier Culture Foundation is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the educational mission of the Frontier Culture Museum. Our office is open Monday- Friday, 8:00AM to 5:00PM.

The Frontier Culture Museum is open from 9:00AM to 5:00PM, April 1 through December 1 and 10:00AM to 4:00PM, December 2- March 31.

American Frontier Culture Foundation, Inc.



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